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ABSTRACT

The State of Oregon has recently developed teacher licensure standards which go beyond the mastery of knowledge and skills, extend into the area of pupil learning, and employ a portfolio or work sample to focus the attention of university and school district educators on whether the preservice teacher has demonstrated the ability to produce learning gains with pupils. This report highlights the utilization of portfolios (work samples) by examining current perceptions, reactions, and feedback from students, teachers, administrators, cooperating teachers, and teacher educators. A work sample consists of a series of related lessons of two to five weeks duration, which is part of the school curriculum where a preservice teacher is student teaching and contains the following elements: (1) goals for a unit of study; (2) instructional plans for each lesson; (3) information on pupils' knowldge and skills prior to instruction; (4) data on learning gains resulting from instruction; (5) interpretation and explanation of learning gains or lack thereof; and (6) a description of uses to be made of the findings on learning gains in planning further instruction and in reporting pupil progress. (LL)

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PRESERVICE TEACHER PORTFOLIOS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE:

A FORMATIVE REPORT

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PRESERVICE TEACHER PORTFOLIOS AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE: A FORMATIVE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

"State licensure of teachers is justified on the grounds that it is the State's responsibility to protect the public from harm (Schalock & Myton, 1988)." Is this the true purpose of professional licensure or do we want to ensure that our teachers meet more than minimal standards before they are licensed?

Educational reform reports (Carnegie, 1986; Holmes Group, 1986; Nation At Risk, 1983) pressured many states to review licensure policies which resulted in numerous changes in certification and licensure across the nation (Pipho, 1986). States became more active in legislating standards and exercising "control over the process of preparing teachers" (Roth & Pipho, 1990). Presently, most states rely upon program approval at the university or college for initial licensure, with three-fourths of the states reciprocating with other states who have similarly approved programs and standards. Program approval is generally focused on the content of college or university course work that composes teacher education programs. A grave weakness found in traditional program approval is the reliance on prescribed courses, grade point averages, and test scores as demonstration of "mastery" of basic skills or content to be taught (Schalock, 1990). Most of the the skills are assessed in the college setting and may not provide authentic assessment of classroom practice.

After reviewing various licensure requirements, the Oregon Legislature and Oregon's Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (1988) developed standards which go beyond the mastery of knowledge and skills and extend into the area of pupil learning. The new standards employ a portfolio or work sample to focus the attention of university and school district teacher educators on whether the preservice teacher has

demonstrated the ability to produce learning gains with pupils. The objective of this study is to examine and describe the use of preservice teacher portfolios as a measure and/or criteria for obtaining initial teacher licensure.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA SOURCE

This report employs a descriptive analysis of the use of portfolios or work samples (the terms portfolio and work sample are interchangeable in this context) by examining current perceptions, reactions, and feedback from students, teachers, administrators and teacher educators to the development and use of the work sample. Participants were interviewed and asked to respond to open-ended questions that probed for the value, effect, and general impressions of work samples. Qualitative methodology was selected to present a comprehensive portrayal of the use of portfolios or work samples for initial licensure in Oregon.

The initial focus of the report is a description of the work sample that is required of preservice teachers in Oregon's fifth-year programs. The description was drawn from Oregon's program standards and from university level teacher educators who have worked with preservice teachers in the development of work samples.

In addition, 38 students and eight teacher educators from four universities were surveyed and interviewed. Eight administrators and 12 teachers at school sites where students had completed student teaching were also interviewed. In order to provide feedback from sources with state-wide experience with work samples, two administrators from Oregon Teacher Standards and Practices Commission were also interviewed.

USE OF WORK SAMPLES IN OREGON

Oregon's approach to teacher licensure has changed to emphasize pupil learning as a measure of evaluating prospective teachers' ability to apply

knowledge and skills acquired through approved teacher education programs (Myton, Nagel, Osterman, 1991). A work sample consists of a series of related lessons, of two to five weeks duration, which is a part of the school curriculum where a preservice teacher is student teaching. The major difference between a traditional unit plan and a work sample is the emphasis placed on assessing and analyzing pupil learning in the work sample. Each work sample contains the following:

Goals for a unit of study;
Instructional plans for each lesson;
Information on pupils' knowledge and skills prior to instruction;
Data on learning gains resulting from instruction;
Interpretation and explanation of learning gains or lack thereof; and
Description of uses to be made of the findings on learning gains in planning further instruction and in reporting pupil progress.

Preservice teachers began planning lessons to be included in their work samples during field experiences and/or courses prior to student teaching. Typically, most universities include training in developing objectives, selecting instructional materials and media, estimating time for instruction, and planning for evaluation of learning during the teacher education program. The critical difference between a traditional unit and the work sample or portfolio is the emphasis on pre- and post- teaching assessment data, interpretation of learning gains, and use of data on learning gains. The work sample forces the goal of student teaching to shift from performing like an effective teacher to demonstrating that one is an effective teacher and that learning gains were made during instruction.

Cooperating teachers also take an active role in the development and implementation of the work samples, and assist preservice teachers in selecting appropriate topics, developing lessons, selecting and utilizing assessment procedures, and interpreting learning gains. The universities present seminars on development and implementation of work samples to cooperating teachers. Each preservice teacher must develop and teach two work samples and receive a satisfactory or above rating on the work

sample from both the cooperating teacher and the university supervisor prior to recommendation for teacher licensure.

Feedback provided by preservice teachers indicated that work samples required a tremendous amount of time and effort, yet "pushed" the student teacher to develop a repertoire of assessment procedures not typically found in most classrooms. At the conclusion of the program, many of the preservice teachers reported that they presented their completed work samples during interviews for teaching position. Preservice teachers also told us that they "were forced to learn a lot about the big picture of teaching from the work sample."

Administrators reported that they were impressed with the planning component required for the work sample. In addition, they were able to determine the expertise of the student teacher in planning units of study through examining the work sample. Another comment made by administrators related to the requirement that both the cooperating teacher and the university had to state that the preservice teacher completed work samples at a satisfactory or above level. Administrators felt that input from the schools was a critical component in the initial licensure procedure.

Teacher educators were enthusiastic about the work sample and the emphasis on pupil learning. All four universities are currently placing a greater emphasis on teaching assessment procedures in the teacher education curriculum. Requiring authentic assessment and use of portfolios with preservice teachers through the work sample enables teacher educators to model assessment techniques that these future teachers are expected to utilize in their classrooms.

Some concerns about the work samples surfaced from cooperating teachers. A frequent comment was, "The work sample takes so much time to prepare. How will they ever have time to do this and teach?" Perhaps these comments reflect the current planning practice of veteran teachers, who tend to do more of their planning in less structured formats. As the role of assessment

and evaluation of learning increases in education, all educators will be expected to improve accountability and demonstrate that students are learning.

The administrators with Oregon's Teacher Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) have reported the quality of the work samples in the universities to be improving, along with an increase in the understanding of work samples. In 1990 and 1991, workshops were conducted to explain the work sample and the use of the work sample to teacher educators and cooperating teacher around the state of Oregon. These sessions were well attended and provided a forum for discussion of the work sample as a measure of teacher effectiveness. Skill and knowledge of pre- and post-teaching assessment emerged as a major weakness during initial implementation of work samples in 1990. To correct this deficiency, the Oregon Association of Colleges for Teacher Education arranged for an expert to conduct teacher training workshops on evaluating pupil achievement. Each teacher education institution was represented by a team of faculty and cooperating teachers that participated in the training. Dissemination of the workshop content is on-going and conducted by these trainers.

IMPLICATIONS

With development and implementation of work samples or portfolios, preservice teachers are expected to go beyond demonstrating subject matter knowledge or teaching skills. Through work samples they must demonstrate their ability to promote pupil learning. Work samples or portfolios provide authentic assessment of the preservice teacher's ability to promote learning in the classroom. The work sample changes the focus of the traditional program approval approach that relied on completion of specific courses, grade-point average, and test scores (Schalock, 1990). Work samples provide a means to assess preservice teachers' ability to apply knowledge and skills in a "real" teaching setting.

The research base is not adequate to support pupil learning gains as the sole basis for determining student teacher competence (Wiersma & Gibney, 1985). Yet, work samples or portfolios provide a critical piece of the picture needed to assess the knowledge and skills of prospective teachers. The recent adoption of a licensing policy in Oregon that includes documentation of the prospective teacher's ability to foster pupil learning has enabled us to shift the focus in initial teacher certification from a prescribed list of courses to demonstration of success in teaching and learning.

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